



## Superintendent's Update

December 8, 2016

Dear Shrewsbury Staff, Families & Community Members,

It is certainly an incredibly busy time of year, and there are lots of events happening and many news items to share. I have included several updates below; additionally, residents should have received the fall edition of the Shrewsbury School Journal in your mailbox last week, or you can read it online [here](#). You will find articles on a variety of topics, including the work of our Innovation Study Group, the Beal building project, robotics coding at Sherwood, a list of this year's new staff, and messages from me and from School Committee Chair, Sandra Fryc.

Our students continue to perform extremely well in the classroom, on the stage, and on the athletic fields and courts. Please note the following informational items:

- Unanimous Town Meeting approval of Beal feasibility study
- SHS football team success
- Music accolades
- Middle school lego robotics tournament
- Testing results and college attendance statistics
- Updated School Committee policies
- Current and projected enrollment
- Educator professional development
- Safety and security activity

### **Unanimous Town Meeting approval of Beal building project feasibility study**

This past Monday, Town Meeting members voted unanimously to approve \$1.2 million of funding, of which 50.16% of eligible costs will be reimbursed by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), to complete a feasibility study and schematic design to determine the best plan for a potential building project that will address the Beal building (built in 1922) and the long-term space needs for our grades K-4 enrollment. I greatly appreciate the support of Town Meeting for this work, which will begin with hiring an owner's project manager and an architect after the MSBA board approval in February. For more information, see the slides presented to Town Meeting [here](#).

### **SHS football team success**

Congratulations to the Colonials, who were league champs and state runner-up for Division 2, on a fantastic season. In addition to their impressive record, I agree with the many who have commented to me on how impressed they have been with the way these student-athletes and coaches comported themselves throughout the season, performing with a team-first attitude while demonstrating respect and class. Earning the right to play under the lights at Gillette Stadium last Saturday is an experience they will never forget, and they made their community proud.

### **Music accolades**

After a highly competitive audition process, 21 SHS students earned All Central District honors for concert band, jazz band, orchestra, and chorus, one of the top showings among all Central Mass music programs. Ten of these students were also invited to compete for All State honors at a future audition. Congratulations as well to seniors Akshay Alamuri and Johanna Geremia for being named to the All Eastern Honor Chorus, having been selected among students from 12 eastern states! Akshay and Johanna will perform in a special concert in Atlantic City, NJ in the spring. Congratulations to all of these talented, hard-working music students and their teachers, and to the many who are performing in our very successful winter concerts.

### **Middle school lego robotics tournament**

Last Saturday, Shrewsbury Robotics hosted the [largest middle school First Lego Robotics qualifying tournament in the state!](#) This event, called MindStorm Mayhem, is a huge undertaking that is run entirely by [Shrewsbury Robotics Team 467](#). The energy and enthusiasm among those competing and in attendance was very high, and represents another big success for our robotics program.

### **Testing results and college attendance statistics**

Information on state testing, SHS testing, and college attendance by the Class of 2016 has been presented at recent School Committee meetings. Our students' performance continues to be very strong in relation to peers across the state and nation, and their preparation in Shrewsbury is providing access to college choices across all levels of selectivity, with 86% of graduates attending a four-year college or university. To view the state testing report (including PARCC and MCAS), click [here](#); for the SHS testing report (including SAT, ACT, AP), click [here](#); and for the future plans report for the Class of 2016 (including where students are matriculating) click [here](#). You may also be interested that [Massachusetts was just ranked as tied for first in the world in reading](#), tied for second in the world in science, and twelfth in the world in math on the challenging international PISA test (Massachusetts was ranked as if it were a separate country). Given our relative performance among districts within our state, it confirms that Shrewsbury schools are indeed "world class."

### **Updated School Committee policies**

At recent School Committee meetings the Committee has approved updated policies in the areas of [illegal substance use](#) and [substance abuse education](#), [physical restraint of students](#),

and [fingerprint criminal background checks](#). Please click the hyperlinks to read these updated policies.

### **Current and projected student enrollment**

Our student population is at another all-time high, and is projected to keep growing (which makes the Beal building project critically important). As of October 1, the annual comparison date, our preschool through grade 12 population was 6,191 students. Additionally, the high school population recorded its highest ever total, with 1,792 students. Click [here](#) for the current enrollment slide presentation and [here](#) for the projected enrollment slide presentation.

### **Educator professional development**

This past Tuesday was our first early release day of the year. Shrewsbury educators spent the afternoon working to develop their skills in a variety of ways. Among others, topics included the study of how to promote high quality student work, engage students in project-based learning, create productive classroom discourse, build a growth mindset, and promote student health and wellness. During my visits to schools during this time, I witnessed several examples of high quality professional collaboration, and I'm confident that this work will have a positive impact on teaching and learning practices in our schools.

### **Safety and security activity**

Yesterday I attended a meeting of our district's Safety & Security Committee, which includes several district administrators, representatives from Shrewsbury Police and Fire Departments, other town department heads, and parents with public safety expertise. This committee was formed after the Sandy Hook tragedy in December 2012, and since then the district has done a significant amount of work to improve safety and security, including adjustments to our emergency protocols; ongoing reviews of building security needs and steps to address them; upgrades of communications equipment; more frequent and effective drilling with staff and students; tabletop scenario emergency management trainings with school administrators and public safety personnel; and ongoing enhancements to video surveillance capability. Most importantly, we continue to focus on building strong relationships between staff and students, and on improving our comprehensive approach to addressing social, behavioral, and emotional health, in order to try to prevent the circumstances that can lead to unsafe behaviors.

Thanks for taking the time to read this information, and thank you for your continued support so that we can continue to provide our students with a world-class education!

Respectfully,

Joe Sawyer  
Superintendent of Schools